

What is Claimed is:

1 1. A method for electronically conducting over a communication network
2 a project bidding transaction for a software item to be developed, said method
3 comprising the steps of:
4 transmitting from a contractor client system over the communication
5 network software requirements definition identifying the software item to be
6 developed;
7 controlling a bidder client system connected to the communication
8 network to display the software requirements definition identifying the desired
9 software item;
10 sending bid information along with an identifier of a bidder of the
11 software item project from the bidder client system over the communication network
12 to a connected central bidding server system;
13 retrieving at the central bidding server system historical metric data
14 previously collected and stored for the bidder identified by the identifier in the bid
15 information received at the central bidding server system;
16 generating by the central bidding server system a bid record along with
17 historical metric data information; and
18 communicating said bid record and historical metric data information
19 over the communication network to the contractor client system for review prior to
20 selection and award.

1 2. The method in accordance with claim 1, further comprising the steps
2 of:
3 determining by the central bidding server system whether a bidder
4 wishing to bid is a registered user.

1 3. The method in accordance with claim 2, further comprising, if the
2 bidder wishing to bid is not a registered user, creating a new account by the central
3 bidding server system for that bidder.

1 4. The method in accordance with claim 3, further comprising the steps
2 of:
3 determining by the central bidding server whether a bidding period has
4 expired;
5 executing a bidder selection process, if the bidding period has expired
6 and communicating from the central bidding server system over the communication
7 network to the contractor client system and to the bidder client system identification
8 of the award of the bid; and
9 subsequent to the awarding of a bid, executing by the central bidding
10 server system an ongoing project metric data collection for monitoring the successful
11 bidder's performance over periodic measuring intervals.

1 5. The method in accordance with claim 3, wherein the step of creating a
2 new account by the central bidding server system includes the steps of:
3 receiving personal data associated with an unregistered bidder;
4 storing in an account database in the central bidding server system said
5 personal data;
6 confirming said new account and said personal data with the bidder
7 client system of the unregistered bidder and informing the previous unregistered
8 bidder of its new account and registration; and
9 creating at the central bidding server system a historical metrics data
10 record associated with the new account in a software metrics database.

1 6. The method in accordance with claim 4, wherein said step of executing
2 a bidding transaction further includes the steps of:
3 determining if a bidder has questions about the software requirements
4 definition;
5 clarifying to that bidder, if necessary, the software requirements
6 definition;
7 estimating a bid for that bidder based on that bidder's historical metrics
8 data record and said software requirements definition;
9 receiving over the communication network at the central bidding server
10 system an actual bid from that bidder; and

11 recording said actual bid associated with that bidder and said software
12 requirements definition in a database in the central bidding server system for the
13 subsequent access, over the communication network, by the contractor client system.

1 7. The method in accordance with claim 6, wherein said step of clarifying
2 to that bidder the software requirements definition further comprises the steps of:
3 receiving questions from the bidder;
4 displaying the questions at the contractor client system; and
5 communicating answers and, if required, modifications of the software
6 requirements definition from the contractor client system to that bidder.

1 8. The method in accordance with claim 4, wherein said step of executing
2 a bidder selection process further comprises the steps of:
3 estimating the cost of implementing the software requirements
4 definition for an associated contractor based on an average historical metrics data
5 record of all registered bidders, as stored in the central bidding server system, and the
6 corresponding software requirements definition;
7 communicating to the contractor client system over the communication
8 network all timely submitted bids and corresponding bidders' historical metrics data
9 individually;
10 receiving from the contractor client system a selection of the successful
11 bidder; and

12 creating a current project metrics data record associated with the
13 successful bidder in the metrics collection database in the central bidding server
14 system.

1 9. The method in accordance with claim 4, wherein said step of executing
2 an ongoing project metrics data collection further includes the steps of:

3 performing selective periodic or continuous collection of software
4 metrics data from developing software via a metrics processing tool;

5 recording the collected software metrics data in a current project
6 metrics data record for updating in a metrics collection database in the central bidding
7 server system; and

8 communicating the updated current project metrics data record to the
9 contractor client system for display to the associated contractor.

1 10. Apparatus for electronically conducting over a communication network
2 a project bidding transaction for a software item to be developed, said apparatus
3 comprising:

4
5 a contractor client system connected to said communication network, software
6 requirement information identifying the software item to be developed being
7 transmitted from said contractor client system over said communication network;

8
9 a bidder client system connected to said communication network and
10 including means for displaying the software requirement information transmitted over
11 said communication network from said contractor client system; and a

12 central bidding server including a software requirement and specification data
13 base, means for storing historical metric data, and means for generating a bid record
14 along with historical metric data information, said generated bid record along with
15 said historical metric data information being transmitted over said communication
16 network to said contractor client system.

1 11. The apparatus in accordance with claim 10 wherein said central bidder
2 server also includes means for storing metric data collected over said communication
3 network for monitoring a successful bidder's performance over periodic measuring
4 periods.

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2 12. The apparatus in accordance with claim 10 wherein said central server
3 further includes an account database for storing personal data identifying a bidder
4 client system.

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2 13. The apparatus in accordance with claim 10 wherein a plurality of
3 contractor client systems and a plurality of bidder client systems are connected to said
4 communication network.